



## Improving Data Collection for a Comprehensive Cancer Control Program

### Public Health Problem

In the process of gathering data for program planning, the Texas Comprehensive Cancer Control Coalition (TCCCC), working with the Texas Department of Health, recognized various gaps and deficiencies in cancer data for the state. In part, these gaps were a result of outdated registry software systems and the lack of specific case reporting requirements in the state registry regulations.

### Evidence That Prevention Works

Data collected by state central cancer registries enable public health professionals to better understand and address the cancer burden. Cancer data are used to determine cancer patterns among various populations, monitor trends over time, and advance research.

### Program Example

The TCCCC facilitated a review of the various cancer data resources for Texas, as well as the processes and systems involved in collecting data. This review resulted in the publication of *Information Management Enhancements to Improve Texas Cancer Data for Comprehensive Cancer Control*. This publication and a companion report (*The Cost of Cancer in Texas*) also produced for the Coalition were critical resources used by the Coalition to document the extent of the data problems. More importantly, the Texas Cancer Council, the Texas Medical Association, the American Cancer Society Texas Division, and other Coalition members used these reports to educate the health commissioner and state legislators about the need for changes in the rules governing cancer-reporting regulations and for improvements in the state's data management systems. The Texas State Legislature subsequently passed a bill (effective September 1, 2001) that updates the state's cancer registry law. This legislation requires reporting of cancer cases to the state central cancer registry by physicians, dentists, and outpatient facilities, including surgical centers. It also strengthens the language that requires hospitals and other reporting facilities to reimburse the Texas Department of Health for the costs of identifying or documenting unreported cancer cases. The Texas Department of Health also asked legislators for increased funding for the cancer registry and other health registries to purchase updated computer software in order to process data more efficiently.

### Implications

Improved coordination of cancer control activities, including monitoring, is a key benefit of comprehensive cancer control planning. Passing this bill is an important first step in addressing the problem of incomplete cancer data. This effort by the TCCCC demonstrates the potential health agencies and organizations have to mobilize collective support for a statewide cancer monitoring system.